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"WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CANCER."**A HANDBOOK FOR THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.**

Admirably supplementing the layman's bulletin on cancer just published by the United States Public Health Service,¹ a 54-page handbook prepared especially for physicians, "What We Know About Cancer," has now been published under the joint auspices of the American Society for the Control of Cancer and the Council on Health and Public Instruction of the American Medical Association.

In a foreword the purposes of this publication are stated to be "to provide in a brief and readily accessible form the important facts about cancer in general, and its manifestations in the different situations where it most commonly occurs."

Responsibility for the control of cancer is placed largely on the physicians. "It is a well-known fact," says the handbook, "that a considerable proportion of malignant tumors are not recognized by the doctor when the patient presents the indefinite early symptoms of the disease. Optimism too often replaces a careful physical examination. The great majority of cancers of the rectum are to-day treated as hemorrhoids for from one to six months. Uterine discharges are often not properly investigated, and curettings are not examined. Cancer of the tongue and mouth is permitted to advance because there is a positive Wassermann. Metastases are produced by repeated rough examinations. Malignant moles and epitheliomas of the skin are imperfectly removed. Clearly inoperable cases are operated on, thus bringing operation into disrepute."

The publication definitely discards the parasitic theory of cancer, states that cancer is not communicated from person to person, that heredity plays practically no part as an etiological factor, and emphasizes, above all, the influence of chronic irritation as a direct or indirect predisposing influence to cancer.

The place of radium, Röntgen ray, and the cautery are clearly indicated. So far as radium treatment is concerned the handbook points out that this treatment "is a safe method only for superficial cancers of the skin of the nonmetastasizing types, or for other forms of surface cancer which have been in existence so short a time that metastasis to the regional lymph nodes can not possibly have already taken place."

A strong warning is sounded against quack remedies, patent medicines, and the like. "Fake 'cancer cures' and herb and Indian doctors * * * increase enormously the mortality from cancer. * * * The patient is encouraged to expect relief, until his

¹Cancer: Facts Which Every Adult Should Know. See Public Health Reports, vol. 34, No. 33; Aug. 15, 1919, p. 1833.

money is exhausted and his disease is too far advanced for cure by operation, when he finally drifts to the charity hospitals, where his sufferings can be controlled only by opiates, and he dies a lingering death, offensive as well to himself as to all with whom he comes in contact."

Of special interest to the physician are the chapters on diagnosis and treatment. On the question of exploratory operations the book urges caution, for "to cut into cancer tissue *in situ*, undoubtedly adds to the danger of dissemination of the disease. In certain regions, however, the radical operation for cancer involves such great operative risk and such serious mutilation, that it can not with justice to either patient or physician be advised on anything but a positive diagnosis."

More than half of the book is devoted to a discussion of carcinoma of different organs. For each of these there is given in succinct form the symptoms, differential diagnosis, the precancerous lesions, the standard operative treatment, and the results which may reasonably be expected.

Sarcoma and other malignant tumors are next discussed, and there is a final chapter on the treatment of inoperable or recurrent cancer.

Altogether this publication embodies the consensus of the best present-day medical opinions concerning cancer, and its careful study by physicians everywhere is most earnestly to be desired.

AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION TO MEET IN NEW ORLEANS.

The next annual meeting of the American Public Health Association is to be held at New Orleans, La., October 27-30, inclusive. The central themes of discussion will be Southern health problems, including malaria, typhoid fever, hookworm, soil pollution and the privy, etc.

In view of the possibility of a recurrence of influenza next winter, a full session will be devoted to this subject for the purpose of developing methods of control.

A special effort has been made to arrange the program to meet the practical needs of health officials. Accordingly, there will be discussion on such questions as the attitude of legislators toward public health, the obtaining of appropriations, cooperation from women's clubs and health organizations, and the organization of health centers.

The programs of the sections will, as usual, deal with public health administration, vital statistics, sanitary engineering, laboratory methods, industrial hygiene, sociology, and food and drugs.